

to raise its minimum wage, but if not, your constituents are no better off. They are still making \$7.25 an hour.

So I have just one question: If you are a well-intentioned, patriotic Republican who wants to leave the decision up to the States, are you prepared to explain to your constituents why they are worth less to you than the people across State lines?

For my part, I do not want low-wage Hoosiers to make less than those in other States just because our general assembly decides not to act. Of course, I understand the argument that some people may work fewer hours and some may even lose their jobs. This may be true. But it is important to remember that we have raised our minimum wage in the past, and in the past, the very same argument has proven itself to be untrue. So I am very optimistic that American employers, and particularly Hoosier employers in my congressional district, will do what they can to weather a minimum wage increase without letting folks go.

Now, unfortunately, this is not the only unnecessary struggle Congress has laid on America's low-income families this year. Today, our well-intentioned, patriotic Republican leaders continue to block an extension of emergency unemployment insurance, and because of congressional inaction, nearly 2 million Americans, Madam Speaker, were instantly cut off from their benefits in December, with 72,000 more being cut off each week.

Many of my Republican friends have painted unemployment benefits as a slush fund for certain lazy Americans. This is not only incredibly offensive, it is untrue. Americans want to work, but in many communities, there are simply no jobs available. In our economic downturn, Madam Speaker, everything from restaurants to machine shops to retail stores closed their doors and are only now starting to come back.

In Indianapolis, many Hoosiers are finding they no longer have the skills necessary for the modern workforce. Educated men and women with years of experience have to retrain before they even get rehired. Others have seen their industries simply disappear and have to prepare themselves for an entirely new career. This is far from laziness. Retraining and looking for a job is hard work with no pay. These Americans deserve our help covering expenses while they get back on their feet.

Madam Speaker, my good House Republican friends have yet to bring a real jobs bill to the floor in the 113th Congress, instead, focusing continually on deregulation and repealing the Affordable Care Act. Meanwhile, they overlook that raising the minimum wage is the right thing to do, putting our country back on track.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair

declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 39 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, through whom we see what we could be and what we can become, thank You for giving us another day.

In these days, our Nation is faced with pressing issues: constitutional, religious, and personal rights, and matters of great political importance.

We thank You that so many Americans have been challenged and have risen to the exercise of their responsibilities as citizens to participate in the great debates of these days.

Grant wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to us all, as well as an extra measure of charity.

Send Your spirit upon the Members of this people's House who walk through this valley under public scrutiny. Give them peace and Solomonian prudence in their deliberations.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LANKFORD led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

SILICA

(Mr. LANKFORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, comments have closed on a proposed rule from OSHA for sand in the workplace.

Prolonged breathing of silica, sand, can cause serious health issues. No one will dispute that. But this new rule is interesting in its design. In the comment request, OSHA specifically singles out one industry—oil and gas—as a key reason for the rule change. They write, in part, “A recent cooperative study identified overexposures to silica among workers conducting hydraulic fracturing operations,” as their prime reason for the rule change.

It is interesting that after the rule has been in place since 1971, OSHA has made this change. Fracking is not new. It has been around for decades. Why the sudden change in this administration?

I believe the change is because this administration is looking for one more way to impede oil and gas development in the United States. If this is not just about oil and gas, will OSHA set new rules for beach lifeguards who work in sand all day? How about road crews in Arizona who work in blowing sand all day? How about gift shops and restaurants along our coasts? What about dune buggy operators in the sand dunes of Little Sahara State Park in northwest Oklahoma?

The people of my district work every day to provide our Nation energy independence and to get our Nation out of the Middle East. But they are tired of fighting mounds of new regulations, unfunded mandates, and attacks on their livelihood as they serve our Nation.

WIND PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT

(Ms. TSONGAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition to talk about a significant issue for Massachusetts and our nation: the wind production tax credit.

In the past 2 years, clean energy jobs in Massachusetts have grown by 24 percent and are projected to grow another 11 percent in 2014. Thanks to the wind industry, the Commonwealth has seen an influx of over \$200 million in capital investment and is home to nine wind-related manufacturing facilities.

Massachusetts is also home to the Wind Technology Testing Center, which at the time of its opening was the first facility in the country capable of testing large-scale wind turbine blades up to 300 feet in length. This testing center has created high-skilled jobs and has helped spur the development of next-generation blades made here in the United States.

We must act now to make sure that these innovative American businesses can continue to create new manufacturing opportunities here in the United States.